

VIRGINIA AVENUE  
Washington  
District of Columbia

HABS NO. DC-712

HABS  
DC  
WASH,  
644-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
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## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### VIRGINIA AVENUE

HABS No. DC-712

**Location:** This avenue stretches from Rock Creek near the corner of I and 22nd streets, NW in a straight line southeast to Constitution Avenue on the north side of West Potomac Park. South of the Mall, the right-of-way contains both roadway and railroad tracks. From Seventh and C streets, SW, to Fourth Street, the roadway runs on the south side of the elevated railroad tracks. Between Fourth and Second streets, the elevated tracks are on the south side of the roadway. The railroad tracks continue on course to New Jersey Avenue where they descend into a tunnel. The roadway disappears between Second and South Capitol streets where the elevated limited-access southeast southwest freeway begins running parallel to the right-of-way. The roadway resumes again at South Capitol Street on the north side of the railroad tracks and crosses under the freeway between First and Second streets, SE. Between Second and Eleventh streets, SE, a multi-lane, elevated freeway runs along the lines of the avenue, and between Third and Seventh streets, SE, the avenue runs on both the north and south sides of the elevated freeway. The avenue ends at Ninth Street, SE, although original plans of the city indicate that it was intended to continue to the Anacostia River.

**Owner/Manager:** The right-of-way spanning from building line to building line is the property of the U.S. government; the paved roadways, sidewalks and the planted areas between are under the jurisdiction of the District of Columbia Department of Public Works. Most of the reservations along the avenue are maintained by the National Park Service, but a few have been transferred to the jurisdiction of the District of Columbia.

**Present Use:** The northwest segment is a major artery, part of the southeast segment is a railroad track route. An elevated freeway has been constructed within the right-of-way between Second Street, SW, and Twelfth Street, SE.

**Significance:** This avenue was designed to emanate from the site indicated for a monument to George Washington. Interrupted by the Monument Grounds, it is divided into two distinct, unconnected segments, both of which have been vastly affected by development in the twentieth century. The northwest segment was redeveloped in the 1960s. The southeast and southwest segments--encroached upon as early as the 1870s by railroad tracks--have been largely compromised by the high-speed Southeast/Southwest Freeway built in the 1960s-70s.

#### PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

##### A. Physical History:

I. Date of plan: 1791, L'Enfant Plan; 1792, Ellicott Plan.

2. Alterations and additions:

1869: Tracks of the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Company authorized between Ninth Street, SW, and South Capitol Street.<sup>1</sup>

1920s: Several blocks at 13th Street, SE, transferred for the construction of a gas holder for the Washington Gas and

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<sup>1</sup> Annual Reports . . . , 1886, 2081.

Light Company.

- 1960s: Changes to the northwest segment included widening the roadway and modifying the intersection at New Hampshire Avenue.
- 1960-70s: Southeast/Southwest Freeway constructed between Third and Eleventh streets, SE.

**B. Historical Context:**

Contemporary Virginia Avenue combines two avenues on the L'Enfant Plan. The avenue that closely resembles the northwest segment of today's avenue stretches from the same circle northwest of Rock Creek in Georgetown that forms a northwest terminus for Pennsylvania Avenue. The right-of-way continues southeast at 136 degrees to a riverside plaza on the Potomac River. In the northwest quadrant it intersects with today's New Hampshire Avenue at a yellow-shaded circle labelled "No. 4." One block southeast, it meets the northern portion of a large open space due north of an historic fort (This site was later designated as Appropriation No. 4). At its intersection with New York Avenue, three blocks north of the canal, is an elongated rectangle that extends south to the canal. This northwest stretch terminates at the inlet and begins anew on the same angle in the southwest quadrant, roughly along the line of today's Maine Avenue.

Today's Virginia Avenue, SW, also has a counterpart on the L'Enfant Plan. It originates at the site for a statue honoring George Washington (Washington Monument), and continues southeast at 110 degrees to the south side of the Mall. The avenue ceases for two blocks and begins again at a yellow-shaded rectangular reservation at Maryland Avenue, labelled "No. 3." It continues southeast four blocks before intersecting Delaware Avenue at a shaded space labelled "No. 8." It then crosses over the canal due south of the Capitol Grounds and continues into the southeast quadrant. At this point it meets a large amorphous open space at the intersections of New Jersey and South Carolina avenues (Garfield Park) that is marked "E," indicating it as the site of a grand cascade. Six blocks southeast of Garfield Park is an unmarked rectangular open space, and two blocks farther south is yellow-shaded rectangle marked as "No. 3" at the intersection with today's Potomac Avenue. Two blocks to the southeast the avenue terminates at the Anacostia River.

When Ellicott created the city plan from L'Enfant's notes in 1792, he combined the disconnected avenues to create one more or less continuous route from Georgetown, through the Mall to the Anacostia River. It originates southeast of Rock Creek and heads southeast at 125 degrees to the site of the Washington Monument. In the northwest quadrant it intersects New Hampshire Avenue at an unmarked rectangular space and crosses through an elongated rectangle at its intersection with New York Avenue. Ellicott's inlet is much smaller than L'Enfant's, giving the avenue greater continuity. South of the Washington Monument site, the avenue runs continuously at 110 degrees from the Mall to the Anacostia River.

**Southwest and southeast segments**

Today, the Mall and Monument Grounds divide Virginia Avenue into two

distinct sections. The southern segment, spanning from the Mall to the Anacostia River, developed in the early nineteenth century as a vital route to the Navy Yard. As early as 1795, wealthy Washington resident Frederick May chose to build his elegant home on the avenue between Sixth and Seventh streets, SW. By the mid nineteenth century, the avenue ran by one of Washington's most populated areas in the vicinity of the Navy Yard and Marine Barracks, and provided access from the northern reaches of the city to the bridge at Eleventh Street crossing the Anacostia River.

The 1857-61 Boschke map shows many houses clustered along the avenue between Eleventh and Third streets, SE, and it is possible this segment was paved. In 1850, the small sum of \$792 was spent to grade the avenue, and in 1853, \$44,000 more was requested to grade and gravel it from Eleventh Street, SE, to the Mall.<sup>2</sup> The second, larger figure included the installation of stone gutters, flag footways, the setting of curbstones in front of public spaces, and the construction of a bridge over the canal that crossed the avenue at South Capitol Street. This second request for funds probably went largely unheeded, for in 1864, the Secretary of the Interior reported, "Virginia Avenue never has been properly opened and improved, and is in a very bad condition. It has become a great thoroughfare for the travel between the west part of the city and Giesboro (Anacostia) and presents a very strong case for the aid of government in its improvement."<sup>3</sup> In 1869, the same year the Secretary of the Interior requested \$25,000 for the avenue improvements, the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Company received congressional authorization to enter the city and build tracks along the avenue from the canal at South Capitol Street to the intersection of C and Ninth streets, SW.<sup>4</sup> This precluded its development as an elegant boulevard, making it more like a barrier between the region to the south and the rest of the city.

Although efforts had been made to improve the parks along this segment of Virginia Avenue, the noise and soot of the railroads made any attempts at beautifying the roadway futile. The largest of these federally owned spaces, Reservation No. 113 between Seventh and Ninth streets, SW had been shaded as a special place on L'Enfant's plan. The greater part of this park was donated to the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad by an Act of Congress approved February 12, 1901, so the post-and-chain fence that had been placed there during an attempt at improvement was moved to another park.<sup>5</sup>

The intrusion of the railroad tracks on the avenue in the nineteenth century was repeated again in the twentieth century by the construction of the Southeast/Southwest Freeway. As early as the 1930s, much of the southeast and southwest quadrants of the city were perceived as blighted areas. While the northwest prospered, these neighborhoods of deteriorating middle-class rowhouses became overcrowded as other parts of the city became too expensive. Various efforts were made throughout the twentieth century to upgrade these nineteenth century houses and eliminate the alley dwellings built within the large blocks.

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<sup>2</sup> Reports of the Secretary of the Interior, 1850, 1853.

<sup>3</sup> Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1864, 685.

<sup>4</sup> Annual Reports . . ., 1886, 2081.

<sup>5</sup> Annual Report . . ., 1902, 2735.

Prior to World War II, the entire southwest quadrant was targeted for redevelopment, and after numerous proposals, ground was broken in 1952. Over the ensuing decades, scores of nineteenth-century structures were razed to be replaced by large office buildings north of the freeway on the F Street corridor and various types of residential units to the south.

Since the face of the region had been drastically altered by the redevelopment, a proposal to slice the two southern quadrants with a multi-lane, high-speed, elevated freeway met little opposition. Built during the 1960s, the Southeast/Southwest Freeway follows the line of Virginia Avenue between Delaware Avenue and Twelfth Street, SE. Freeway construction eliminated several of the triangular reservations along the avenue and significantly reduced the size of Garfield Park.

While some segments of Virginia Avenue developed slowly, part of it was never even cleared. Although L'Enfant intended the avenue to extend to the Anacostia River, the southernmost three blocks, between Twelfth and 14th streets was neither graded nor paved, and the flanking reservations, Nos. 128, 129, and 130 were never landscaped. Although cast-iron posts inscribed with the OPB&G initials were erected in Reservation Nos. 128 and 129 in the 1920s, they remain vacant today. Recognizing the lack of development at this end of the avenue, Congress authorized the transfer of this portion of the avenue to the Washington Gas and Light Company whose gas holder remains in place there today.

#### Northwest segment

While the section of the avenue in the southern quadrants experienced moderate development in the mid nineteenth century, the northwest segment of the avenue, too far south of bustling Pennsylvania Avenue, attracted few residents. In 1813, New York Congressman John Peter Van Ness and his wife, Marcia Burns Van Ness--sole heir to one of the largest property holdings in Washington--commissioned Benjamin Henry Latrobe to build their estate adjacent to the President's Grounds at the point where Virginia Avenue, NW, met the mouth of the city canal.<sup>6</sup> Although this estate became a center of early Washington social life, the Van Ness's had few neighbors on Virginia Avenue. At the time, their property was on the water front. Farther to the northwest, the avenue ran through a low-lying, marsh, that was appropriately designated "Foggy Bottom." This region, near the waterfront attracted industries such as glassmakers and brewers.

A photograph taken from the Washington Monument in the late nineteenth century shows the lone Van Ness mansion facing south onto the newly covered canal, while the blocks between the estate and New York Avenue form a vast expanse of undeveloped land criss-crossed by the cleared paths of unpaved streets.<sup>7</sup> The row of trees needlessly lining the entire distance of the undeveloped avenue was probably planted during the vast program of infrastructural improvements undertaken by the District of Columbia Board of Public Works during the brief reign of a territorial government between 1871-74. North of New York Avenue, large water tanks marked the intersection with New Hampshire Avenue.

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<sup>6</sup> Goode, Capital Lossees, 32-33.

<sup>7</sup> Goode, Capital Lossees, 33.

As with the southern quadrants, the twentieth century brought change to the northern segment of the avenue. After the Board of Public Works oversaw the conversion of the canal into a sewer in 1872, and the marshy area west of the monument was reclaimed from the Potomac River to create West Potomac Park, the environs of the southern end of this portion of the avenue were ripe for development. The U.S. government purchased the lot occupied by the deteriorated Van Ness home in 1908 and razed it, and Andrew Carnegie funded the construction of the Beaux Arts Pan American Union on the site. One block northwest of this, the Department of Interior built its main headquarters in the 1930s.

With the advent of the automobile and the expansion of the city beyond the original boundaries into Virginia, the mid twentieth century brought major changes to the Foggy Bottom area. Congestion was already becoming a problem in 1941 when a proposal to create a square block for the Pan American Union by closing the roadway between Constitution Avenue and 18th Street was abandoned due to strong opposition by residents who believed the closure would worsen the traffic situation.

As early as the 1930s, Foggy Bottom had been earmarked as a future enclave of government offices, similar to the Federal Triangle, to be called the Northwest Rectangle. During World Wars I and II, the government constructed temporary office buildings on several of the lots along the thoroughfare. Additional "tempo" built in the newly reclaimed West Potomac Park contributed to the traffic problem. Major changes began taking place in the surrounding neighborhood in the 1960s. The 1960 Theodore Roosevelt Bridge linking Foggy Bottom with Northern Virginia and the E Street Expressway introduced new traffic patterns to the area. Described in 1964 as "a nondescript thoroughfare that once linked the Potomac Flats with the Gas Works," Virginia Avenue had developed into one of the most heavily travelled commuter feeders in the downtown area--with a minimum of 2,000 cars per hour during peak use.<sup>8</sup>

This, combined with a number of new office buildings, necessitated widening the avenue. Meanwhile, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts was under construction at the base of New Hampshire Avenue near the shores of the Potomac River, and its setting would require special treatment befitting its monumental and cultural significance. While planners of 1940 may have seen the L'Enfant Plan as "no longer well-fitted to a modern city" and "lack[ing] the basic physical requirements of a democratic city,"<sup>9</sup> planners of the 1960s were returning to it for inspiration, as the McMillan Commission had three generations earlier.

Growing recognition of the Federal Triangle's shortcomings led planners to seek new strategies for developing Virginia Avenue. The Federal Triangle had come to be seen as a barrier between the northwest quadrant and the Mall, as well as a dangerously desolate place at night. When considering ways to develop Virginia Avenue, "the spine" of the Northwest Rectangle, planners advocated mixed-use buildings because, "an area that combines different kinds of buildings will not become a black and lonely island after dark, there will be lights and

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<sup>8</sup> Eisen, 1964.

<sup>9</sup> "Washington Analyzed," House and Garden, July 1940, 40; and Alfred Kastner, "The Plan," House and Garden, July 1940, 41, as cited in Colyer, 144-46.

movement. It will be safer."<sup>10</sup>

The eventual development of the northwest segment of Virginia Avenue was engendered by the National Capital Planning Commission's (NCPC) "Year 2000 Plan." The NCPC goal for Virginia Avenue was to create variety in the streetscape while establishing a unified composition. A system of parks running the length of the avenue would achieve this uniformity amid diversity. Although the small triangular parks were a "happy byproduct of the L'Enfant plan," after the avenue was widened, the existing triangles would have been too small to produce this effect. Many of the triangular reservations were expanded, with their landscape plans often integrated with the grounds of abutting federal buildings. Reservation Nos. 378, 383, and 384 were added to the park system, created from land acquired by the federal government and occupied by World War I tempos. These properties had come under the National Park Service purview in the 1930s, further simplifying their conversion into new urban green spaces. While the Federal Triangle project focused on the massive Neoclassical buildings, the structures planned for Virginia Avenue were to look outward onto the open spaces along the avenue and direct attention to the impressive vista of the Washington Monument.

After L'Enfant's circles had been pared down, tunneled under, or completely eliminated throughout the city, the Virginia Avenue plan introduced a new solution to the traffic-circle dilemma--the divided plaza intersection. When he shaded the intersection of Virginia and New Hampshire avenues yellow, L'Enfant placed it among the fifteen spaces to be assigned to the various states for embellishment. Despite L'Enfant's intentions, this juncture featured two insignificant triangles, platted out as reservations by the OPB&G in the nineteenth century since the neighborhood hardly merited a landscaped circle with statuary or a fountain. The triangles were nevertheless maintained by the OPB&G and enclosed with cast-iron post-and-chain fences, but they were overshadowed by the massive cylindrical gas containers that stood in the adjacent lots.

As part of the 1966 "Special Streets" plan, the intersection had to be rebuilt because the Potomac River Freeway--the west leg of the inner-loop freeway--was to run underneath it. When freeway construction was completed, in place of the small triangular parks was a large sodded ellipse. Unlike traffic circles elsewhere in the city, however, this intersection was configured so that Virginia Avenue continues uninterrupted through the space while the other roadways branch off in a curved sweep. Every street leading away from the plaza was designed to frame a vista to a landmark: the National Cathedral, the Washington Monument, Washington Circle, and the Kennedy Center. The planners also recommended placing a building in the air-rights space above the freeway tunnel opening on the northwest side of the intersection to shield the park from the noise of the freeway and further define the urban space.<sup>11</sup> Although this structure was never built, the planners' goal to erect a monument or fountain in the largest portion of the circle to provide a focus, was satisfied in 1969 by the bronze statue of Benito Juarez.

The statue honoring the former president of Mexico complemented the Latin-American statuary theme along the avenue. A statue of Jose Artigas, the father of Uruguayan independence had been erected at the south end of the

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<sup>10</sup> Special Streets . . . , 7.

<sup>11</sup> Special Streets . . . , passim.

avenue, near the Pan American Building in 1950, and in 1954, South American liberator Simon Bolivar was commemorated with a huge equestrian portrait in Reservation No. 383. In 1976 when the San Martin statue had to be moved from Judiciary Square for Metro Construction, it was relocated on Virginia Avenue in Reservation No. 106. Around the same time, a statue of Spanish-American patriot Bernardo Galvez, donated by the King of Spain, was erected in Reservation No. 720 over the freeway tunnel.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. Overall dimensions:

1. Width: 120' from building line to building line.
2. Length within city limits: The avenue is approximately one mile long in the northwest quadrant. In the southwest quadrant, the right-of-way is approximately 1.6 miles long, but the roadway is discontinuous, with disjointed segments running on both sides of the railroad tracks and freeway that occupy much of the right-of-way.

### B. Elements within the right-of-way:

1. Roadway, medians: In the northwest segment, the avenue supports three lanes of two-way traffic from Rock Creek Parkway to 18th Street, and the block between 18th Street and Constitution Avenue supports one-way north-bound traffic and angle parking for tour busses. Between 22nd and 24th streets, two lanes each way are tunnelled under 23rd Street, while one lane each way remains on the surface for interchanging traffic. Two long, slender parallel Belgian block medians run the length of the avenue between the Rock Creek Parkway intersection and the traffic circle at the New Hampshire Avenue intersection. Single brick medians divide northbound and southbound traffic throughout the rest of this quadrant, except for a narrow concrete median that separates traffic entering the 23rd Street underpass.

In southwest and southeast quadrants, the roadway shares the right-of-way with an elevated freeway and railroad tracks. From Seventh to Fourth streets, SW, one lane each way runs along the south side of the elevated railroad tracks and from Fourth to Second street the two-lane roadway runs on the north side of the tracks. The roadway is discontinued between Second Street, SW, and South Capitol Street, although the railroad tracks run along the grade and the elevated freeway shifts southeast at this point from its east/west course along F Street turning south to run aside Virginia Avenue. The roadway begins again between South Capitol Street and runs on the north side of the railroad tracks to where they enter a tunnel at Second Street, SE. Between Fourth and Eighth streets, SE, on- and off-ramps that could be construed as remainders of the historic avenue flank the elevated freeway.

2. Sidewalks and street trees: Throughout most of the northwest quadrant, wide, continuous sidewalks and sodded strips with street trees flank the roadway. Narrower sidewalks without trees flank the remaining roadway



segments in the southeast and southwest quadrants.

3. Large reservations:

- a. The avenue continues through the round, divided intersection at New Hampshire Avenue. Although small triangular reservations were installed here first, today's large traffic circle, comprised of Reservation Nos. 134 and 134A, was constructed in the 1960s. The portrait statue of Benito Pablo Juarez, erected here in 1969, is a copy of another designed by sculptor Enrique Alciati in 1895 and was cast in Mexico City. The base and pedestal were designed in the United States by architect Louis Ortiz Macedo. The 12'-tall standing figure of the former Mexican president was a gift of the Mexican people.<sup>12</sup>
- b. L'Enfant's plan indicates a large park at the Maryland Avenue intersection in the southwest quadrant. Despite plans for its improvement as a park, the rectangular Reservation No. 113 designated here by the OPB&G has been encroached upon by railroad tracks since the nineteenth century. The sodded remainder of this open space is maintained by the National Park Service and features a "tot lot" at the west side used by a nearby day-care center.
- c. The avenue passes one of the city's largest reservations, Garfield Park, between New Jersey Avenue and Third Street, SE (See HABS No. DC-674).
- d. L'Enfant indicated another shaded space at the intersection with Potomac Avenue. Designated as Reservation No. 126 by the OPB&G, this large park has served as a playground since the early twentieth century. Although it was reduced in size when the Southeast/Southwest Freeway was constructed, it continues to serve as a large playground with paved basketball courts, playing fields, a recreational building, playground equipment, and picnic tables. It was transferred to the District of Columbia October 18, 1971.

4. Smaller reservations: The following list describes the locations of the reservations identified along this avenue by 1894, the date they were first recognized as federal property, the date of transfer, the date of first improvement (if known), and a description of historical and current appearance as of summer 1990.

- a. Reservation No. 94: South of the avenue, east of Rock Creek, north of I Street, NW. Officially identified in 1894, this park was never formally improved and falls within the land assigned to Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway (See HABS No. DC-754).

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<sup>12</sup> Goode, Outdoor Sculpture, 479-80.

- b. Reservation No. 95: North of the avenue, west of 27th Street, south of I Street, NW, (868 square feet). Officially identified in 1887, this reservation was transferred to the District of Columbia March 2, 1965 (Land Record 488). The freestanding triangle features grass and a concrete sidewalk along Virginia Avenue.
- c. Reservation No. 96: South of the avenue, west of 26th Street, north of H Street, NW, (1,408 square feet). Officially identified in 1887, this triangular reservation was transferred to the District of Columbia April 17, 1962 (Land Record 425). The property is now incorporated in the landscape surrounding the Watergate Hotel and is indistinguishable as a federal reservation.
- d. Reservation No. 97: North of the avenue, south of H Street, NW. Officially identified in 1872, this reservation was transferred to the District of Columbia March 2, 1965 (Land Order 487). Like Reservation No. 96, it is now incorporated into the landscape of a hotel and is indistinguishable as a federal reservation.
- e. Reservation No. 98: South of the avenue, north of G Street, NW. This freestanding triangle was pared down from 10,153 square feet to its current 1,131 square feet according to a transfer of property made June 30, 1969 (Land Order 652). It now features a concrete sidewalk along Virginia Avenue, sodding, and four ornamental trees.
- f. Reservation No. 99: North of the avenue, west of 24th Street, south of G Street, NW. Initially identified as federal property in 1872, this freestanding sodded triangle is surrounded by quarter-round coping, concrete sidewalks, and sodded strips planted with street trees.
- g. Reservation No. 100: South of the avenue, east of 24th Street, north of F Street, NW, (7,360 square feet). Initially identified in 1872, this reservation was transferred to the District of Columbia February 14, 1962 (Land Record 406). It is now encompassed within the landscape of the adjacent building and is indistinguishable as a federal reservation.
- h. Reservation No. 101: North of the avenue, east of 23rd Street, south of F Street, NW, (1,013 square feet). This semicircular reservation abutting City Square No. 38 was officially identified in 1887. It is sodded but is badly worn and features a flagstone path on the east side, two shrubs, and shade trees.
- i. Reservation No. 102: South of the avenue, east of 22nd Street, north of E Street, NW. Officially identified as federal property in 1884, this reservation was reduced in size and transferred to the District of Columbia March 8, 1965 (Land Order 489) and now serves as a brick traffic island.

- j. Reservation No. 103: North of the avenue, south of E Street, NW. Officially identified in 1894, this triangle is atop the E Street Expressway and was transferred to the District of Columbia April 20, 1970 (Land Order 673). It is sodded and planted with shade trees and features a central rectangular area paved with ornamental Belgian blocks with backless concrete-support wood-slat benches. This area is shielded from the noise of the nearby freeway by a surrounding aggregate wall and hedge.
- k. Reservation No. 104: South of the avenue, west of 21st Street, north of E Street, NW. Officially identified in 1894 and now listed as a 935 square-foot reservation owned and maintained by NPS, no reservation appears to remain at this site.
- l. Reservation No. 720: South of the avenue, east of 22nd Street, south of E Street, NW. This reservation was transferred to the National Park Service from the General Services Administration and the District of Columbia on December 18, 1973. The large, amorphous sodded reservation sits atop the E Street underpass. The equestrian statue of Bernardo de Galvez was erected in the center of the reservation May 21, 1976. The bronze statue was a gift from King Juan Carlos of Spain in recognition of the U.S. bicentennial. Galvez was military governor of Louisiana by royal decree and conducted a vigorous campaign against the British with the conquest of Pensacola in 1781.
- m. Reservation No. 105: South of the avenue, east of 22nd Street. This reservation officially identified in 1884, was vastly enlarged according to legislation passed on May 14, 1969. The park is named for Edward J. Kelly, a local park official. The bronze reproduction of the "Discus Thrower," a fifth century, B.C., Greek sculpture, was erected in the park in 1956. The 5'-tall statue was a gift from the people of Italy in gratitude for the return of Italian sculpture seized by the Nazis during World War II. Italian President Grondisi presented the statue to President Dwight D. Eisenhower.
- n. Reservation No. 106: North of the avenue, east of 21st Street. Officially identified in 1884, this reservation was enlarged by an order dated May 2, 1969 as a result of the closure of a segment of New York Avenue. Most recently, the park was redesigned in 1971 by NPS landscape architects, Frank Neubauer and Darwina Neal and Donovan and Associates. The equestrian statue of General Jose de San Martin was erected in Judiciary Square in 1925. It was moved to this site in 1976. Cast of Argentine copper it stands atop a pedestal of granite slabs.
- o. Reservation No. 378: South of the avenue, between 20th and 21st streets, NW. This large reservation upon which the Martin Federal Reserve Building now stands was purchased by the federal government in 1923, although temporary government buildings were erected on the property during World War I. After the tempors

were razed in the 1960s Department of Interior Employees used it as a parking lot. In 1966 the reservation was increased by 24,520 square feet to its current size of 95,355 square feet. In 1969, the Federal Reserve Board agreed to reimburse NPS for 50% of the cost accrued in improving the area, and an underground parking lot was constructed on the site with a park on its surface-level roof. Dedicated as Robert Latham Owen Park in 1976, the land was named for the Oklahoma Senator, a member of the Cherokee Nation, who was the principle advocate of the Federal Reserve Act. It was redesigned by Oehme van Sweden and Associates, Inc. in the mid 1970s when its southern magnolias were replaced with ornamental grasses and trees, open lawns used for temporary sculpture exhibits, seating, and a tennis court.<sup>13</sup>

- p. Reservation No. 107: North of the avenue, east of 20th Street, south of D Street, NW. Officially identified in 1887, this reservation was transferred to the District of Columbia September 9, 1960 (Land Record 345) and is now incorporated in the landscape surrounding the U. S. government's Office of Personnel Management.
- q. Reservation No. 108: South of the avenue at C Street, NW. Officially identified in 1894, this reservation formerly abutted the city square on the west. It is now attached to the square to its south due to the closure of a section of C Street, NW, legislated March 21, 1969 (Land Order 626). It is sodded and surrounded by concrete sidewalks and planted with several shade trees.
- r. Reservation No. 109: North of the avenue, south of C Street, east of 19th Street, NW. Officially identified in 1894, this reservation was transferred to the District of Columbia February 9, 1935 (Land Transfer Order 99). It is now incorporated into Reservation No. 383.
- s. Reservation No. 383: North of the avenue, west of 18th Street, south of C Street, NW. The tip of this reservation is the former Reservation No. 109 and the remaining land in this large parcel was purchased by the U.S. government in 1925. The park that now fills the site was designed in 1957 by Cesar Casielles of Venezuela and William Bergman of the NPS. The asymmetrical design includes a central polygonal pool that contains ornamental grasses and a small island with a tree. Designed as a small ecosystem, the pond supports fish, turtles, and ducks. East of the expansive sodded area surrounding the pool is a raised terrace featuring a large equestrian statue of Simon Bolivar. The statue was designed by sculptor Felix W. de Weldon--who also designed the U.S. Marine Corps (Iwo Jima) Memorial--and architects Faulkner, Kingsbury and Stenhouse. Erected in 1959, the 27'-tall bronze statue of the Latin American

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<sup>13</sup> Van Sweden and Oehme, 476-78.

liberator is mounted on a Swedish black marble pedestal. The six fountains in the adjacent reflecting pool represent the six countries Bolivar liberated. The statue was donated by the Venezuelan government and is one of the largest equestrian statues in the country.<sup>14</sup>

- t. Reservation No. 110: South of the avenue, east of 18th Street, north of Constitution Avenue, NW. Initially identified as federal land in 1872, this freestanding triangle features a statue of Jose Artigas, father of Uruguayan independence. The statue faces the Mall from its formal setting on a granite square in a semicircular flagstone terrace. A backless granite bench faces the statue on the opposite side of a flagstone path that runs through the park parallel to Constitution Avenue. Sodded areas with several shade trees and shrubs flank the central path. The portrait statue of Uruguayan revolutionary hero General Jose Gervasio Artigas was designed by sculptor Juan M. Blanes and erected in 1950. A replica of a statue in Uruguay, the bronze figure was funded by contributions of Uruguay's schoolchildren and the Uruguay Chamber of Deputies. The granite pedestal is inscribed "From the people of Uruguay to the people of the United States. Liberty of America is my dream, and its attainment is my only hope."<sup>15</sup>
- u. Reservation No. 111: North of the avenue, west of Eleventh Street, south of Independence Avenue. When it was officially identified in 1884, this reservation was already planted with grass and enclosed with a cast-iron post-and-chain fence. It was transferred to the District of Columbia June 22, 1965 (Land Record 503). A connector ramp to the Southeast/Southwest freeway runs through the former reservation.
- v. Reservation No. 112: South of the avenue, west of Ninth Street, north of C Street, SW. Originally identified in 1872, this reservation was first improved in 1902. It was transferred to the District of Columbia June 29, 1965 (Land Record 504). The former reservation is now within the complex of office buildings constructed as part of L'Enfant Plaza.
- w. Reservation No. 114: North of the avenue, east of Seventh Street, south of C Street, SW. Originally identified in 1884, this reservation was transferred to the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Company February 28, 1903. The site now contains part of the railroad overpass structure.
- x. Reservation No. 115: South of the avenue, west of Sixth Street, north of D Street, SW. This sodded quadrilateral abuts a city square

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<sup>14</sup> Goode, Outdoor Sculpture, 470.

<sup>15</sup> Goode, Outdoor Sculpture, 443.

and features concrete perimeter walks and is crossed by a concrete path.

- y. Reservation No. 116: South of the avenue, east of Sixth Street, north of D Street, SW. This freestanding triangle is planted with shrubs, grass and a single shade tree. A round fiberglass and metal table with connected benches has been placed in the center of the reservation. It was transferred to the District of Columbia in January of 1947.
- z. Reservation No. 117: North of the avenue, west of Fourth Street, south of D Street, SW. Officially identified in 1884, this reservation was transferred to the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Company February 28, 1903.
- aa. Reservation No. 118: South of the avenue, west of Second Street, north of E Street, SW. Officially identified in 1884, this reservation was transferred to the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Company February 28, 1903.
- bb. Reservation No. 119: South of the avenue, east of Second Street, north of E Street, SW. Officially identified in 1887, this reservation was transferred to the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Company February 28, 1903.
- cc. Reservation No. 120: North of the avenue, west of Delaware Avenue, south of E Street, SW. Officially identified in 1884, this park was never officially transferred, but now seems to be lost in the midst of the freeway network.
- dd. Reservation No. 121: South of the avenue, east of Half Street, north of F Street, SW. Officially identified in 1884, as early as 1887, railroad tracks passed through this reservation in the form of a sidetrack into Marlow's coal yard, as approved by an act of Congress January 19, 1891. The reservation was officially transferred to the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Company February 28, 1903.
- ee. Reservation No. 122: South of the avenue, east of Fourth Street, north of I Street, SE. Officially identified in 1884, this reservation was occupied temporarily for the storage of materials used to construct the Virginia Avenue railroad tunnel. The sodded reservation is now divided into two pieces by a roadway. The southeast piece is crescent shaped and the northwest piece is hexagonal; neither is landscaped nor well maintained.
- ff. Reservation No. 123: North of the avenue, east of Sixth Street, south of I Street, SE. Officially identified in 1884, this reservation was used for storage in the early twentieth century as the railroad tunnel was constructed. It was transferred for the Southeast Freeway March 1, 1966.

- gg. Reservation No. 124: South of the avenue, west of Seventh Street, north of K Street, SE. Originally identified in 1884, this reservation was used for storage in the early twentieth century while the railroad tunnel was under construction. This sodded quadrilateral has a concrete sidewalk along Seventh Street; paths have been worn by pedestrians along Virginia Avenue and K Street.
  - hh. Reservation No. 124A: South of the avenue, east of Seventh Street, north of K Street, SE. This bricked triangle transferred to the system of reservations in March of 1916 has two curb cuts for handicapped crossing and a traffic signal.
  - ii. Reservation No. 125: North of the avenue, west of Ninth Street, south of K Street, SE. This reservation was transferred in 1966 for Southeast Freeway and has been completely covered by the elevated roadway.
  - jj. Reservation No. 127: North of the avenue, east of Eleventh Street, south of L Street, SE. By 1894, this reservation was already occupied by the tracks of the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Company. Officially transferred April 25, 1967, for Southeast Freeway, it is completely covered by the elevated roadway and railroad tracks.
  - kk. Reservation No. 128: North of M Street, east of Twelfth Street, SE. Although this reservation was identified as federal property, Virginia Avenue was never extended to this point and the unimproved area is used as a parking lot.
  - ll. Reservation No. 129: North of the avenue (as planned), south of M Street, SE. Although this reservation was identified as federal property, Virginia Avenue was never extended to this point and the undeveloped land is indistinguishable as a reservation.
  - mm. Reservation No. 130: South of the avenue (as planned), north of Water Street, SE. This reservation is unmarked and located in the midst of uncontrolled roadside vegetation.
- C. Framing Elements: The northwest segment of the avenue is built up with federal and institutional buildings, many of a monumental character. South of the Mall, the elevated freeway has obliterated any sense of neighborhood in the vicinity of the freeway.
- D. Vistas: The avenue travels on axis with the Washington Monument, and despite interruptions caused by overpasses, the elevated freeway and the railroad tracks, the tall monument can be seen from many vantage points along the avenue.

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Maps:

- Board of Public Works. "Exhibit Chart of Improved Streets and Avenues." 1872.
- Boschke, A. "Topographical Map of the District of Columbia surveyed in the years '57, '58, and '59."
- Ellicott, Andrew. "Plan of the City of Washington." 1792.
- Hopkins, G. "Map of the District of Columbia from Official Records and Actual Surveys." 1887.
- L'Enfant, Pierre Charles. "Plan of the City of Washington." 1791.
- Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. "Plan of the City of Washington, District of Columbia, showing the Public Reservations." Prepared by Orville E. Babcock. 1871.
- Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. "Map of the City of Washington showing the Public Reservations Under Control of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds." 1884, 1887, and 1894.
- Toner, Joseph M. "Sketch of Washington in Embryo." 1874.

B. Early Views:

- ca. 1890: Aerial view northwest along the avenue from the Washington Monument (shown in Goode, 33; Original by L. C. Handy, National Geographic Society, G-916x).
- ca. 1927: Survey photographs of each reservation (Photographs of reservations now under NPS jurisdiction are in the NPS Reservation Files; photographs of reservations transferred from NPS to the District of Columbia are in the HSW Reservations Collection).

C. Bibliography:

- Annual Reports of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1867-1933.
- Annual Reports of the Secretary of the Interior, 1848-66.
- Colyer, George Speer. "The L'Enfant Plan in Downtown Washington: Its History and Prospects for Survival." Masters Thesis, George Washington University, 1987.
- Eisen, Jack. "Face Lifting Planned for Virginia Avenue." Washington Post. February 7, 1964.
- Goode, James M. Capital Losses: A Cultural History of Washington's Destroyed Buildings. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1979.
- Goode, James M. Outdoor Sculpture of Washington. Washington, D.C.:



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Reservation Files. Office of Land Use. National Capital Region Headquarters. National Park Service.

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#### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION:

The Plan of Washington, D.C., project was carried out from 1990-93 by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) Division, Robert J. Kapsch, chief. The project sponsors were the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation Inc. of Washington, D.C.; the Historic Preservation Division, District of Columbia Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, which provided Historic Preservation Fund monies; the National Capital Region and its White House Liaison office, NPS; and the National Park Foundation Inc.

HABS historian Sara Amy Leach was the project leader and Elizabeth J. Barthold was project historian. Architectural delineators were: Robert Arzola, HABS; Julianne Jorgensen, University of Maryland; Robert Juskevich, Catholic University of America; Sandra M. E. Leiva, US/ICOMOS-Argentina; and Tomasz Zweich, US/ICOMOS-Poland, Board of Historical Gardens and Palace Conservation. Katherine Grandine served as a data collector. The photographs are by John McWilliams, Atlanta, except for the aerial views, which are by Jack E. Boucher, HABS, courtesy of the U.S. Park Police - Aviation Division.